

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM  
MEETING NOTES  
March 3, 2004  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM  
HOUSE  
PORTLAND, OREGON**

**FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS**

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the “record” of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

**Spring Creek Update:**

Scott Bettin, BPA, reported that spill for the Spring Creek hatchery releases began at 8:00 pm on 3/2. The gauge reading at Warrendale showed 105 TDG this morning. As a higher flow than expected has been needed for this operation due to tidal and other influences, BPA requested that the elevation be reduced from 12.7' to 12.4'. Oregon reported that TDG monitoring will be done where chum redds are residing, currently at elevation 11.3'. The preferred operation for protecting chum redds from gas saturation is one foot above redd spawning areas and no higher than 108% TDG.

**ACTION:** During the break, Oregon and USFWS coordinated and agreed to the new proposed operation and will continue to monitor gas levels carefully. If a concern develops after talking with field staff, Oregon and USFWS will contact the COE.

Steve Haeseker, USFWS, reported that both this and next week's sets of hatchery fish are marked and will be studied for routes of passage and survival rates. The release operation for next week is still being coordinated. The agencies coordinating on this issue agreed to a three year operation: spill and study this year and no spill for the next two years (2005-2006) for Spring Creek hatchery releases.

**MOP on the Lower Snake River:**

John Pigott, chair of the Columbia River Towboat Association, presented information to TMT about the Lower Snake River as an important export corridor. There has not yet been agreement for dredging of the Snake River, so the Towboat Association requested that TMT consider another year of operating at MOP+1 at all the Snake River projects beginning around April 1, in order to provide safety measures. John noted that safety concerns are an issue regardless of the towboaters' good safety record, and that this has become an increasing concern for the towboaters as well as the Coast Guard.

Kyle Martin offered that while CRITFC's general policy is to operate at MOP, he will make certain that his commission considers the request put forth today. Kyle will report back to the group next week.

**ACTION:** TMT will consider the proposed operation and continue discussions at the March 17<sup>th</sup> TMT meeting.

### **CRITFC 2004 River Operations Plan:**

Kyle Martin provided a hard copy of CRITFC's 2004 River Operations Plan, which is also posted on the TMT website. Kyle offered TMT an overview and answered initial questions that TMT members had about the plan. Bob Heinith will send a cover letter to the Action Agencies requesting a formal review, with comments due by all who wish to comment on March 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **WMP Spring/Summer Update:**

Cindy Henriksen, COE, reported that the first draft Spring/Summer update has been posted on the TMT website and is available for comment. She noted that some of the information in the update is from last year's data and will be updated in the next draft (e.g. Hanford Reach operations will be updated once an agreement is reached by the parties). "Other Spill" operations were added to include the Chief Joseph/Grand Coulee spill swap. Anyone that has questions on this particular item should contact Jim Adams, the water quality coordinator for the COE. The COE is hoping to finalize the document by the end of March; TMT members are encouraged to provide comments by and at the March 17<sup>th</sup> TMT meeting.

### **Operations Update/Fish Status:**

BOR: Grand Coulee is at elevation 1260.2'; Hungry Horse is at 3513.5' and discharging to meet Columbia Falls.

COE: Libby is releasing 4 kcfs (minimum) and is just below 2400'. Dworshak is at elevation 1508'; outflow was reduced to minimum on 3/2. The March final water supply forecast from the RFC is not out yet, but the February final and March early bird show a downward trend in water supply.

Salmon Managers: Cindy LeFleur, Washington, reported that the first commercial fishery started yesterday. Fishing is slow as of yet, which is not unusual for this time of the year. Ron Boyce, Oregon, noted that good returns are expected this year.

### **Next Meeting, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 9am-noon:**

#### **Agenda items:**

- WMP Spring/Summer Update
- MOP+1 at Lower Snake Projects
- Unresolved Issues Discussion (from last fall)

### ***1. Greeting and Introductions***

The March 3 Technical Management Team meeting was chaired by Cindy Henriksen of the Corps and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The following is a distillation, not a verbatim transcript, of items discussed at the meeting and actions taken. Anyone with questions or comments about these minutes should call Henriksen at 503/808-3945.

## ***2. CRITFC 2004 River Operations Plan.***

Kyle Martin briefed the TMT on CRITFC's 2004 River Operations Plan, noting that a letter requesting formal review and comment will be forthcoming from CRITFC in the next week. Martin noted that the tribes have offered similar plans for the past five years as an alternative to the TMT annual Water Management Plan. He then touched on the following major topics:

The foundation of the plan is a naturally-peaking hydrograph to benefit outmigrating juvenile and returning adult salmon. Its operational goals include faster travel time to the estuary, enhanced water quality in the mainstem and the estuary, and reduced predation

- The plan uses altered flood control rule curves at Mica, Arrow, Grand Coulee, Brownlee and Dworshak to bring about a naturally-peaking hydrograph – in general, CRITFC would have the storage projects at significantly higher elevations than the federal plan by April 15.
- CRITFC is concerned about current flood control operations; a number of storage projects are currently well below their Upper Rule Curve elevations
- Brownlee operations – the CRITFC plan advocates the release of an additional 450 KaF of Upper Snake storage from Brownlee, as well as 237 KaF of Hells Canyon storage. The plan makes the following elevation recommendations for Brownlee: 2077 feet by March 31 (vs. the planned elevation of 2072.5 feet); 2058 feet by April 15 (vs. 2044.8 feet planned). The other Brownlee elevations in the CRITFC plan match the planned operations in the federal Water Management Plan.
- Spill (p. 19) – CRITFC is advocating more spill than the BiOp requires in 2004, as well as an extended spill season (mid-March through mid-September)
- Operate the Mid-Columbia projects to minimize Hanford Reach stranding
- With respect to the Nez Perce/Idaho plan for Dworshak operations, CRITFC would like to see that plan fully implemented in 2004
- With respect to tribal treaty fishing, CRITFC would like the Corps to recognize all of Zone 6, not just the Bonneville pool
- With respect to process, CRITFC believes CBFWA, not the TMT, should be the proper forum for FCRPS operational decision-making.

Martin asked that formal comments on CRITFC's 2004 River Operations Plan be submitted by March 31. How deep would CRITFC take Libby and Hungry Horse this summer? Bettin asked. We would take Libby down to elevation 2441.5 by the end of September, Martin replied; at Hungry Horse, we would draft to 3540 by September 30. But you would take Libby down to 2370 by mid-April? Henriksen asked. That's correct, Martin replied, but the model runs show that Libby would refill by early May. In response to another question, Martin said Hungry Horse operations would follow a similar, aggressive VARQ operation. Bettin noted that Mica Dam is unlikely to refill in 2004, in contrast to CRITFC's more optimistic assumption.

## ***3. Spring/Summer Update.***

Henriksen said the first draft of the 2004 spring/summer update is now available via the TMT homepage; she noted that the flow and reservoir elevation information it contains is based on the February final forecast, and will change as the season progresses. Based on this forecast, the 2004 sturgeon flow volume has been calculated at 0.88 MAF; Grand Coulee's summer draft limit would be 1278 feet, Henriksen said. She went briefly through some of the other items that have been changed in the 2004 plan. In response to a question, Tony Norris noted that Reclamation is estimating that 300 kaf will be available for Upper Snake flow augmentation in 2004, similar to what was provided in 2004; the 2004 Upper Snake water supply forecast is running only about 27% of average.

With respect to spill, Henriksen said the Corps had provided its best guess as to what those operations will be in 2004. The main question, of course, is the duration of spill, she said; we have provided estimates of its shape and quantity. The group briefly discussed the planned 2004 Chief Joseph/Grand Coulee spill swap, as well as planned fish passage research.

Henriksen asked that any comments on this document be provided prior to the TMT's next meeting on March 17; she said the Corps hopes to finalize the spring/summer update by March 31. Please let the Corps know if you see anything that needs to be changed, said Silverberg, and we will discuss the update further at the March 17 TMT meeting.

#### ***4. Spring Creek Update.***

Scott Bettin said Bonneville spill started last night at 8 p.m. in support of the Spring Creek hatchery release. The gauge at Bonneville acts differently once you turn spill on, he said; for that reason, we are releasing 155 Kcfs, rather than 135 Kcfs, to maintain a tailwater elevation of 12.7 feet. He asked that the TMT agree to reduce the Bonneville tailwater elevation to 12.4 feet during the Spring Creek spill operation, to reduce the total flow volume at Bonneville. Rudd Turner said District technical personnel feel that the gauge is operating correctly; however, there is a slope between the spill bays and the gauge, which is what causes the discrepancy. David Wills said there may be some wiggle room in the tailwater elevation, said Turner, because the highest redd is believed to be at about 11.8 feet.

The current Bonneville discharge is...? Paul Wagner asked. About 157 Kcfs, with 49 Kcfs spill, Jim Adams replied. We were targeting 108 percent TDG at Warrendale, Wagner noted; so far, the monitors are showing relatively low TDG levels – 104-105 percent. If we stay at this tailwater elevation, we will have to shut off spill for awhile to allow the pool to refill, said Bettin.

Ron Boyce said field crews will be measuring TDG levels at the redds, which is probably the best indicator; he said he would prefer to get that information before agreeing to reduce total flow at Bonneville. Why is it taking so much flow to maintain that tailwater elevation? Steve Haeseker asked. Because the tides are against us, and flow out of the Willamette has dropped off, Bettin replied. And the intent is to maintain the spill operation for 96 hours? Boyce asked. Correct, Bettin replied.

Again, I would like to talk to field staff before agreeing to a reduction in Bonneville's tailwater elevation, Boyce said. Can you do that within an hour? Bettin asked. Yes, Boyce replied. It was so agreed.

After a break, Haeseke said that, after conferring with Boyce, the salmon managers are willing to accept Bonneville's proposed reduction in the Bonneville tailwater elevation to 12.4 feet, contingent on physical monitoring information. If the field crews find anything alarming, Haeseker said, we will contact TMT. It was so agreed.

Haeseker said that, with respect to the Spring Creek release, the fish were released Monday afternoon; spill started last night at 8 p.m., once the fish started to arrive at Bonneville in large numbers. Field crews are out today monitoring both fish movement and gas levels, he said, adding that the operations in support of next week's release of the second batch of fish are still under discussion. That release is likely to be made on Monday, so the operation will probably be quite similar to this week's, Turner observed. We may wait until Wednesday to release the fish, said Haeseker; again, we'll work out the specifics, and let the TMT know the plan via email. Spill for the current release is scheduled to end Saturday, March 6 at 8 p.m. Bettin added that the Spring Creek spill agreement will run for three years, with no spill in support of the release in 2005 or 2006, unless conditions are catastrophically different.

#### ***5. MOP on the Lower Snake River.***

John Pigott, chair of the Columbia River Towboat Association, said that, since his group addressed TMT last year, the Snake River has not been dredged, despite the fact that the Columbia/Snake is the second most-important export corridor in the U.S. We have been unable to reach agreement on responsible dredging of the Snake, he said; we therefore respectfully make our annual request that you operate the Snake river pools at one foot above minimum operating pool (MOP +1).

We have done everything we can do to bring the dredging situation to a favorable conclusion, said Pigott; in the meantime, we are running out of water. Although we continue to have an excellent safety record, the reality is that this situation is analogous to shortening a runway at PDX. A transportation company cannot afford to fail; we have adjusted our operating strategies and business model to this situation. People therefore seem to feel, well, they're getting by, so this is much ado about nothing, Pigott said. However, the fact is that we have reduced our safety margin, and the river continues to silt up. What will happen is that, at some point in the future, one of our operators will run out of runway, and there will be a tragedy. I urge you not to view the fact that we continue to operate safely as a diminished threat, either to our operators, or to the communities we serve, or to listed fish species that might suffer if there was a spill in the river, Pigott said. All we're asking for is some reasonable consideration of the importance of this trade corridor, until a reasonable dredging plan that meets everyone's needs can be put in place.

Larry Johnson of the Columbia River Towboat Association, described the specific safety problems that arise because of shoaling in the Snake River, noting that the fact is,

in some parts of the river, in the channel, if the operators don't pull back enough on the throttles, they ground every time – that's how much worse it's gotten since last year. This is an issue that affects the economies of the 13 states the Snake/Columbia navigation corridor serves, observed Dixon Shaver.

Travis Coley of the Coast Guard, noted that the Coast Guard is very concerned about safety issues during the dredging impasse. Things are getting pretty dicey, he said; we've not only had issues with towboaters carrying cargo, but with passenger vessels as well. It's a problem that is going to persist, he said; we're simply trying to buy time until the dredging issue is settled in court, and ask for your consideration.

Your request is for all four Lower Snake pools? Wagner asked. Correct, Pigott replied. The group discussed the extent of the shoaling problems within the pools, as well as the deployment of navigation aids to mark shoal areas. Kyle Martin said he will run this request by the CRITFC tribal commission. Russ Kiefer asked whether the shoaling or "filling up" has changed the cross-sectional configuration of the reservoir, such that MOP +1 is actually producing the same hydrologic/flow velocity conditions as MOP did a few years ago. At some points in the reservoir, that is likely true, said Tony Norris.

What's the time-frame for this request? Silverberg asked. Typically, we would want MOP +1 to begin in the first week in April, Pigott replied. In response to a question from Henriksen, Glenn Vancelow said the shoaling problem is especially acute at the ports of Lewiston and Clarkston in the Lower Granite pool; the ports could actually use 1.5-2 feet of water above MOP.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, it was agreed to revisit this issue at the TMT's March 17 meeting.

#### ***6. Operations Update.***

Norris reported that Grand Coulee is currently at elevation 1262; Hungry Horse is at 3513.5 feet and meeting the Columbia Falls minimum flow. Libby continues to release the 4 Kcfs minimum, and is just below elevation 2400, said Henriksen; Dworshak is currently near elevation 1508 and is now at minimum outflow. We're awaiting the March final water supply forecast from the River Forecast Center, she said; the March early-bird continues to show a declining trend – at The Dalles, for example, the March mid-month forecast shows 87 percent of average, down from 93 percent of average in the February final. Bettin said there are no current problems to report on the power side.

#### ***7. Next TMT Meeting Date.***

The next Technical Management Team meeting was set for Wednesday, March 17. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

### **TMT PARTICIPANT LIST**

**March 3, 2004**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Mary Karen Scullion	COE
Kyle Martin	CRITFC
Scott Bettin	BPA
Tim Heizenrater	PPM
Nic Lane	BPA
Russ George	WMCI
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
David Benner	FPC
Mike O'Bryant	CBB
Laura Hamilton	COE
Tony Norris	USBR
Steve Haeseker	USFWS
Jim Adams	COE
Cindy LeFleur	WDFW
Rudd Turner	COE
Paul Wagner	NOAAF
Julie Ammann	COE
Ron Boyce	ODFW
Tom Haymaker	PNGC
Dan Bedbury	EWEB
Lance ELias	PPM
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Ruth Burris	PGE
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